

# **MICHAEL'S MESSAGE FOUNDATION, INC**

My name is Debbie Alumbaugh. I am the surviving mother of Michael Tiedemann; he was 15 years old when he died. That was just over two years ago. The cause of Michael's death was aspiration vomitus and GHB or (Gamma Hydroxybutyrate) Toxicity.

Michael was a sophomore at Westwood High School in Ft. Pierce, Fl. He was a black belt in karate, and was also an instructor. He had won several academic awards for reading, music, mathematics and spelling. He was on the honor roll.

On October 1, 1998, Michael came home from school, and asked if he could go to the show with some friends, this was unusual for a school night, as we usually did not allow him out during the school week. We also required Michael to bring home a weekly progress report. That evening, he had brought it home and was doing well making A's & B's. Before he left, a friend came to the house; they went directly to Michael's room. His friend was only in our home for 5 minutes. This is when Michael was given the GHB.

We found out 18 months after Michael died, that when they left our home for the movie, they stopped at the local park to shoot some hoops. Michael had the ball and went for a lay-up and when he came down, he passed out. He lay there unconscious for several minutes. This should have been a red flag to his friends that something was wrong. They giggled and laughed and scooped my son up and put him in the car and onto the movie they went. We understand that Michael didn't see the first five minutes of the movie, he passed out again. When they returned home from the show, Michael's father looked at our son and asked "Are you on something son? Did you take something?" He replied no dad. After continuous questioning, he finally admitted that they had smoked some pot. Brad decided not to lecture Michael this late, he would talk to him tomorrow. Brad never got that chance.

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Michael died that night; in his safest place of all places, alone in his bed.

The next morning Brad went to wake Michael for school. He could hear Michael's alarm blaring. Michael did have intentions of getting up. When he opened the door, he knew our son was dead. He thought his head was going to explode, thought he was going to have a heart attack. Brad's instinct was to close our son's door and run from the house. The scene was horrendous. Our son was on his back, eyes wide open, glassy. His mouth hung open, his tongue so swollen, his father couldn't close his mouth. He had dried vomit running down his chin into a puddle in his collarbone. His hands were in a clawed position, where he had tried to roll himself over but couldn't, because the drug had paralyzed him and taken away his gag reflexes. Because we didn't know why our son had died, there had to be an autopsy. It took twelve weeks for us to learn why our son had died none of his friends would come forward. **GHB** leaves the body very quickly. They took our sons brain; that is where they found this drug. There is no antidote for **GHB** Overdose.

In the last three years, we have lost 174 young people to these designer drugs in Florida alone. That is 173 tragedies just like ours.

After several months, Michael came to his father in a dream. He said "Dad it is wrong to destroy the body the way I did. I need you and Mother to tell my friends, my generation; my story, our tragedy." "You don't have a clue about the drugs they are faced with daily. This put a burden on Michael's father and I until one day we gathered up enough courage and strength to make the first call.

I tell the students what took our sons life, and then tell them a little about Michael. I tell them he was not only a great son, but also a loving son. June 1st, Michael would have celebrated his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and enjoyed the pleasure of graduating on that same day. We missed prom and graduation because of this deadly drug. Since our son's death, our family has not been able to have any celebrations.

We are here to have our voices heard. This is a dangerous and deadly drug. It has taken many lives; not only in death, but in addiction also. Addiction to GHB is as serious as dying from it. What kind of life can there be when you have to have this drug every 2 hours, and without it you go into withdrawal. Detoxification from GHB is very difficult. It cannot be done in 3-5 day period. There must be professional help that knows what to do to save your life. We have devoted our lives to this. We have chosen to take our tragedy and educate our nation. We have turned our grief into

something positive and constructive.

We travel to schools from 6th grade to 12th, and on into college sharing our son's story. Our goal is to take Michael's Message Nationwide; in the hopes of saving another family the heartache and devastation this drug has caused our family. We have shared our message with just over 35,000 students in our first year. Our children are our future. Students inform us after hearing our story that they didn't know, they thought it was safe. That's what the Internet says. They tell us with tears streaming down their faces, that they worry about friends who are taking GHB. We feel that parents and grandparents should hear Michael's Message also. Because it is a relatively new drug, most parents are unaware that it even exists. They must be educated to the signs and symptoms of GHB use and abuse. Education plays a key role, not only informing the kids that it is wrong, but death is a consequence of this activity. Michael's voice must be heard.

I am here today, with the hope that GHB will not be made available legally.